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Hello,

First, thank you for taking input and letters from people who care about the environment, climbing, and preservation of land.

I am writing regarding the Evaluation and Authorization Procedures for Fixed Anchors and Fixed Equipment in National Park Service Wilderness Areas. I have read it and see how it speaks to the concern and desire to preserve climbing opportunities as well as preservation and safety of national sites.

I am a rock climber. I first rock climbed as a child at a kids' summer camp and picked up the sport as an adult in 2017. When I go to any outdoor climbing crag, I uphold a profound respect for the grounds and rocks I am surrounded by. "Leave no trace" is the bare minimum. There is so much more practiced outside. This includes respect, care for the environment, and not adding undue damage to plants, wildlife, or lands. Additionally, the quality and safety of the hardware (bolts, anchors, etc.) are also of utmost importance to climbers, as we depend on those for protection. Rock climbing outside is one of my greatest passions of all time. Enjoying it amidst nature is largely why we do it.

Please know that we understand the role of the Forest Service regarding climbers, but also understand our concern with the proposal.

I suspect that Forest Service employees are often overworked and underpaid, working within a limited budget. I currently work in the healthcare field and am daily faced with inequities such as those. This plan will create additional burden and expectation for Forest Service employees to make climbing manageable and able to continue. Climbers will not stop climbing where allowed to. Anchor installation, re-bolting and updating will always continue to be in demand.

Safety is compromised if these anchors and fixed hardware sites are not addressed promptly. Fixed anchors are essential for climbers' safety. For many, many decades, fixed anchors have not been considered "installations" under the Wilderness Act. Overregulating the monitoring and inspection of fixed anchors will not do justice for the practice of keeping wilderness areas safe. Safety becomes compromised. By having imposed regulations on anchor quality, a factor that has been managed and initiated by the climbing community for decades, this slows down the ability to keep climbing routes safe and open. It is also difficult for non-climbers to properly survey and assess the patency of anchor systems when there are countless factors that go into how an anchor or fixed line is installed and preserved. The eventual outcome of this directive would ultimately lead to the decline, closure, and devastation of so many loved and renowned climbing routes.

There is concern about how it will be implemented in a functional, healthy, and manageable way. Climbers will forever rely on fixed anchors. Climbers will continually confront wait times and the "red tape" of the process. It is simply unreasonable and unrealistic to create new policies on climbing anchors after these same fixed anchors have been managed and authorized for decades prior.

Without the resources to keep active in this directive, climbing routes would become inaccessible, closed, and the climbing community would suffocate. This directive threatens to remove climbing and its accessibility. This directive needs to uphold safety and also allow the legacy and decades of amazing climbing history to be continued and honored. Removing current climbing routes steeply and quickly threatens this.

Please hear our plea and desire to work alongside the United States Forest Service, Regional Foresters, and Forest Supervisors, as well as District Rangers, to work with the climbing community who cares to streamline these processes, care for safety of land and individuals, and maintain safe and enjoyable use of public lands.

Thank you for being open to our requests and feedback. Thank you for your care and hard work towards sustainability, long-term enjoyment of parks and land, as well as your dedication to keep the climbing community active and safe.

Katie VanDomelen